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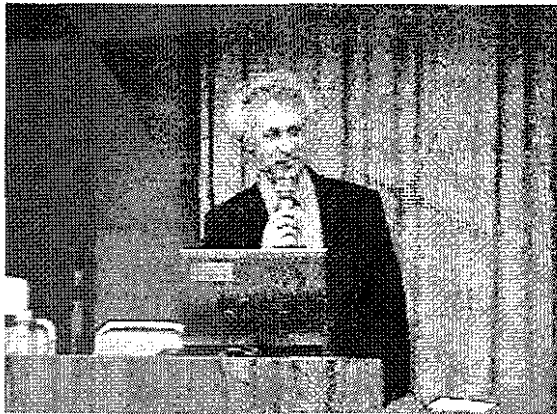
Presentation 1

A Postmodern Critique of the Virtual University

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Good afternoon. First, let me thank the center and specifically Prof. Araki, Prof. Tanaka and Prof. Oyama for inviting my colleagues and me. We are very honored to be here and thank you Oyama for the good weather, also. It is letting us enjoy Kyoto much



more with such nice weather.

The title of my talk as you have seen is "A Postmodern Critique of the Virtual University." Let me explain a couple of things before I start. First, my overall focus is, as Prof. Tanaka has noted, "what is the role of the virtual university?" But to that I will add, "what is the role of a virtual university in a democracy?" That is, what are the issues that we are dealing with equity and class-based issues, which will certainly be one of my themes. The other theme I will look at will be the role of higher education in cultural and economic development. And then what role does the virtual university have? We are talking about these same sorts of issues.

So, in my talk today, what I will do first is to discuss a little about education in a democracy and the role of the state. Then, I will talk about the social function of higher education and its various problems. Then, I will look at the questions that we all have about the virtual university. And then, I will offer some conclusions and more questions about the social role of virtual universities.

Now certainly I do not have all the answers. I am not sure I have many of the answers, but I have lots of questions. So, I see my role as that of a social critic to provoke questions. And we will have a chance at the end to discuss the questions. Part of the value of getting together across the Pacific Ocean is that this technology was sent by e-mail, so I did not have to bring anything with me. Sometimes technology is working very effectively, so we begin with that as a proviso.

What I want to talk about concerning education and democracy is the conflict we have between social interests. Often we talk about modernists and postmodernists: the idea of

a very modern, scientific way of looking at education and looking at knowledge in a postmodern way that looks more at equity issues in a more post-colonial way, the idea of the new world order and the idea of a more global citizenship.

And we have some contrasts that we can look at between modernist concepts and postmodernist concepts. This would be the role of education for reproduction, or the role of education for democratization.

This is the idea: is education just to reproduce the existing structure and the existing class structure, or is the purpose of education to democratize our citizens to make them better citizens of our individual nations, but also of the global culture?

Now this does not mean that you can only do one and you cannot do the other. We can think of this as a continuum that we want to move education somewhere along this continuum, so it is not only one or only the other. So this raises the question about the virtual university. Does this tend to favor one side or the other side and how do we prevent that or help that along if it does?

Another issue is the function of education and knowledge itself. Is the purpose of knowledge and the purpose of education to just accumulate capital? Those of us are good examples. We have all accumulated a lot of knowledge and was that our purpose? Did we fulfill our purpose compared to socialization? Are we giving people knowledge so they can hold it and possess it? Or are we giving people knowledge so they can be a better part of the culture and be more socialized?

This also raises the question of the public good versus the private good. Is education for the purpose of the private benefit of the individual or is education for the public good of the nation or of the world? And again it does not mean that we can only do one or only the other. But we have to look at what the benefit of education is. Who benefits here, public good or private good? What do we want especially when we are talking about education in a democracy? And we can also distinguish between private education and public education, privately owned knowledge and publicly owned knowledge.

Also, we have a good example between individualism and collectivism between the United States and Japan that the United States is primarily a very individualistic country, Japan is more collectivistic. So how do our educational systems reflect the difference between individualism and collectivism and where does the virtual university fit into these cultural notions? How will we use knowledge? One of my concerns always in the role of education is this concept of culture. Does education produce culture, does it preserve culture? What role do we want education to play?

I have been working with a colleague in Malaysia on the preservation of culture in Malaysian higher education. There are some specific programs in Malaysian higher education that helps preserve the culture that gives money to students to have cultural programs and encourage cultural issues. Again, this is a different function for education:

private knowledge, public knowledge. Is it for personal gain or for collective gain? These are some of the questions that give us context for the virtual university. And finally, there is this notion of knowledge. Is knowledge for individuals or is knowledge seen as a capital commodity, something that the larger social institutions gather. And these ideas raise a number of post-colonial concepts: the idea of some countries responsible for other countries, and some countries in charge of other countries, some countries economically conquering other countries. What is the role of knowledge, and what is the role of universities in these public democracies?

Next, I want to talk briefly about education and the state. Now the state is the larger notion that includes the government, the armed forces, the military, so the larger concept of the state is what Althusser talks about. So what role does education play within the state and is it sometimes seen as a compensatory commodity? This is the concept that education is given as social welfare, the idea that we will compensate you for the public good by giving you education. Is this how we use education?

In some highly underdeveloped countries, education is only a compensatory commodity, the idea is that education is given as a commodity. I hope you understand what I mean by a commodity. It is the same idea as a product that the state would give to people to make them happy. But education is seen very different when it is given as a commodity instead of something that helps enlighten them or let them be part of the democracy. So sometimes the state uses education simply as a commodity to gain goodwill.

The State also uses education as part of the national culture. This is the idea of the state helping to produce and inculcate values into individuals. Again, what is the role of the state in education? So let us also think about the virtual universities. Does the virtual university have a role to play in culture? Is it inculcating things? Is this how we use the virtual university?

One thing that has been very important for me in my research, and I have a couple of projects that I am doing with colleagues in Brazil right now, is the protection of national sovereignty. This is the idea of what it means to be a nation and how we hold onto our identity as a nation. What does it mean to be Japanese? What does it mean to be Malaysian? What does it mean to be American? This is something that we have been dealing with in the past year in new ways we never have before.

What is the role of higher education as a public good in helping to maintain national sovereignty and is this even a good idea? Should we maintain national sovereignty as opposed to regional sovereignty and what role should higher education play? Especially as it is part of the state. How does the state use higher education to help preserve culture to help protect national sovereignty? And then, how does that state help to distribute this knowledge? Who gets the knowledge?

Here is where I have probably the largest criticism I have of the virtual university; that is, the conflict between high status knowledge and technical knowledge. Virtual universities may work best for technical knowledge or certain types of knowledge as opposed to high status knowledge. For example, you probably are not going to become a brain surgeon at the virtual university. You are probably not going to become a major professor of science, laboratory sciences, at the virtual university.

So the virtual university has a function, but it tends to be at one end where we have high status knowledge on the other. And as I will talk about, one of my concerns is the status difference between who goes to the virtual university and who goes to the real university, and who gets access to each one. And again this relates to this notion of research and training which is that high status knowledge is research, lower status or technical knowledge would be the notion of training.

Education has a very definite social function to play. We can talk about the globalization of knowledge. Here, we are in Japan, thank you very much for letting us speak English because my Japanese is not very good at all, I could do this better in Portuguese. But here we are in what has become unfortunately the international language, English. French is much prettier, and I know Portuguese. So this is part of the global notion of how things have changed.

And so we have again, the idea of accumulating knowledge as a capital function versus the cultural function of knowledge. In fact, for those of us where English is our first language, it is sometimes embarrassing that English has become the international language. This prevents our own country from understanding other countries as well as it should because we are not very good at other languages by and large within our country. This is partly because of size, partly because we are an island unto ourselves which continues to get us into trouble.

Here, then again, is my concern about the decline of the nation state's role. Is this the end of national culture? There is a lot of argument among postmodernists. Is this the end of history? Is this the end of culture? And as we talk in globalized ways about knowledge, what happens to individual identity of cultures and national sovereignty and what role does higher education play? Again, what we are working on doing in Malaysia is specifically looking at the national role universities have in helping to preserve culture. Is this a good model? Is this an important thing to do?

So these are questions that we all have to ask ourselves about national culture, but also what seems more interesting to me is regional culture and regional identity. I have done some work in the Northeast part of Brazil that is very distinct and different from the Southeast part of Brazil, which is the industrial area. The Northeast is the poorer area but also has the better food, and the better movies, and samba came from Northeast Brazil, so what about national identity? Not so much Brazilian identity but the idea of

regional identity. Again, what is the role in higher education and as we will question what about virtual universities?

I have a question about the social function of higher education as a producer of knowledge, which we could say is the teaching aspect. You can obviously do research on culture, but do we favor producing knowledge? Does the virtual university produce knowledge? Will that be its role? Will that be a function of higher education? Or what is the role for teaching culture and including culture in the notions of higher education? Again, this is the social function of the state.

There are many problems with the role higher education plays in society. I have a list of these; we will go through these fairly quickly just to give you some ideas about questions. One of the biggest criticisms in education in the United States today is that it has become capitalistic, academic capitalism. And the idea in order to survive is that universities have had to turn towards ways to make money. This takes education out of the social function as helping to preserve culture and helping to create disinterested science. There is a very good book by Sheila Slaughter on this notion of academic capitalism.

As universities become more private as we talked about over lunch today, will Kyoto University be forced more towards academic capitalism? Will Kyoto University be engaging in behaviors that have less to do with knowledge production and preservation of culture, but more to do with making money to survive as a university?

This is where my own perspective is that education is too valuable to be seen as a commodity. We have a social function to play in education and I am gravely concerned by what is happening in the United States over the notion of academic capitalism. Universities also have the problem of being the knowledge factory. Aronowitz has a very good book on the knowledge factory aspect of university education.

That is, the purpose of universities is to turn out knowledge and the best example of this is the University of California in Los Angeles, a huge university. UCLA has 40,000 students and its nickname, the name that the students call UCLA, is "the factory". The students feel like they are products, educational products being turned out as commodities. And that is why I chose to be in a much smaller university because we can focus less on the factory notion and less on academic capitalism. Although as a dean now, I have great concerns for how we are going to raise enough money to keep my school of social science going. So I feel like I am becoming an academic capitalist. Please help me!

One of the issues that we have concern for in the US, of course, is the effect of globalization which in many ways is just Americanization. It is Kentucky Fried Chicken, it is McDonalds. This is part of globalization and I think that the protestors at the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle have much reason to protest about the benefits and disadvantages of globalization.

One of the concerns is the neoliberal reduction of the support for education in many, many different countries; that is again, turning universities into academic capitalists. We will not support education by the public as much as we used to. What damage does this do to the role of universities, the role of education in society?

And again, I have some concerns about the virtual university as more a function of academic capitalism than a form of learning. There are many different philosophies of learning and the role of higher education. We do not have enough time to spend on this, but the notions of higher education are based on philosophies such as the reason of Kant, the culture of Humbolt, and the concept of capital from Marx.

But one of my chief concerns as I have here on the bottom is this notion of access and equity. Who gets into higher education? So this is one of my greatest concerns for the virtual university: who gets access? What is the purpose of the virtual university and who does it serve? So let me just talk about the purpose. There are various purposes for the virtual university, one could be to expand access, give more people opportunity to access higher education.

But again, I am concerned about high status knowledge and low status knowledge. Just giving access to education is not enough, you have to give people access to high status knowledge, not just greater access to low status knowledge. The virtual university can increase capacity. But this is an interesting issue because just like Japan, in the United States, our school aged population is declining. Why do we increase capacity unless we are going to broaden the notion of access?

For academic capitalism, the profit notion of virtual universities, the US market for education is \$ 735 billion. This has caught the attention of many capitalists in the US to make money from education in general, and from the online market, which in 2002 was \$9.4 billion. The expectations are that it will be \$ 53.3 billion by 2003. So the current use is primarily by public universities, 78%, less by private. 8% offer degrees and there is a creation of certified online instructors, which I found interesting when I was doing some of the background work for this presentation. Again, my biggest criticism is the class-based problems for virtual universities.

What we found so far with virtual universities is that there is often high dropout rate. Students feel very isolated and often there is a lack of a larger infrastructure. Again, the class-based problem is for students who want to have access to high status knowledge, and become physicians, scientists, and lawyers and professors; can they do that at the virtual university?

Or again, what is the differentiation between who is getting access to online education and who is getting access to residential education or traditional education? Now certainly it can be a mix of both which is one of the issues that we are going to talk about. But again I raise this as a question for us. We have to be very careful about who is

getting access to what level of knowledge.

In the US as most of you know, we have severe racial conflicts between whites and blacks, whites and Hispanics, all across the races. It is one of the continuing troubling problems we have in the US both economically as well as educationally. And as we would assume, there is a gap between who gets access to online education between whites and blacks.

Finally on this particular slide, one of my concerns for class-based questions about education is what Paul Freire talks about with "Pedagogy for the Oppressed." This is the idea that we are merely banking education in people's heads. His notion is that traditional education deposits information in students' heads and at the end of the term calls those deposits back. This is the banking mode of education.

So both the benefit and disadvantage of the virtual university is that it does not have to follow the banking mode of education. But the concern would be who is getting access to this education? Are we just using this education to make deposits of knowledge in students' heads?

Another concern I have about virtual university is the cultural issue. Cross culturally, who gets access? Also we have pedagogical issues; what about the quality of teaching? Again there is a list of questions that we want to consider if we had more time to discuss them. One critical issue is the lack of socialization and acculturation at the virtual university; that is, do you teach people to be leaders at the virtual university? Do you teach people to be diplomats? What about the creation of social and cultural capital, where does this happen?

One of the criticisms of virtual universities is, is it not an anti-intellectual experience? That is the idea; it is not thoughtful knowledge. If it is knowledge as a commodity, how does it prepare people for life? And then we get into the role of private versus public education. Maybe you are familiar with the University of Phoenix, a private institution, is actually doing an excellent job of filling its market and a very good example of academic capitalism both to its benefit but perhaps disadvantages for education in general.

We have some colossal failures already in the virtual university so if you have time I certainly encourage you to look up some of these cases. The US Open University suffered \$20 million in losses and closed recently. As an aside, the person who was the president now just became the chancellor of the University of Oregon system. So we picked up someone who had a colossal failure, I am not sure if it was such a good idea. The Western Governor's University is struggling for acceptance. Again, it is an online program.

And we have some other for-profit losses: the Columbia Consortium, New York University, Temple University. These were all universities that thought they were going

to make money online, and turned out not to be able to make money, so they have shifted, still doing online education but now in a different way of thinking about it. One of the concerns was, are there significant differences in the teaching and the outcomes of online education. Or, is this just to make money?

Briefly we will look at higher education's future. That is, what kind of university is needed for the future? How are we going to solve social, economic and environmental problems? How will we, especially in the United States reduce income inequality between the races and the social classes? Again, is education just accumulating capital? Or is it helping to preserve culture? What about professional knowledge? Where does this happen? Where do you go to become a scientist? Where do you go to become a professor? Are we talking about government research for the social good, where does this happen? Is this a function of the virtual university?

One of my concerns, of course, as the dean of the social sciences, is the role of liberal education where I want acts of cognition, not just transferring information, that Paulo Freire talks about. So we want people to be thinking. We want students to be able to engage in what we call disinterested science, the idea of science for science's sake to discover new knowledge. Again, where does that happen? And we are concerned about promotion of national identity and obviously sovereignty again. I am not saying that this can only happen at traditional universities, or cannot happen at virtual universities, but what questions does this raise?

So for us then, what is the social and economic role of universities? And I think that even though we are talking and focusing on the virtual university, we need to think about what is the role of universities in society. Where are we going with higher education? What function do our universities play for our respective countries? What about developing issues I am are working on in Brazil and Malaysia?

What about comparisons between Japan and the US? We are on top economically. Even though we are having a downturn, we still have the largest economies. We still have the greatest potential for using higher education for our own benefit, national sovereignty, but also global.

A question I have is the cultural appropriateness of the virtual university. Again what is the social function of higher education for our countries? You have issues with testing hell, socialization and job connections that we also have. Then we also have, and this is meant somewhat as a joke, the problem that virtual universities do not have football teams. In the US this is extremely important.

People come to universities because they want to have an identity and they go to football games. Would virtual university football teams be a way to deal with the difference in socialization? I think Prof. Tanaka's comment that we need to think of the virtual university in its own reality is very important. I think there is an excellent case

to be made, so we could propose virtual football teams because it is part of a different reality. I do that, humorously, with tongue in cheek, as we say, but it is an important issue in trying to understand the function of higher education in society. What role do virtual universities play in socializing students and preparing citizens for the democracy? And then one of the postmodern dangers about academic capitalism is equity, social, intellectual research development. I am concerned about the role of universities if they have to become academic capitalists. Would they be able to do disinterested science or only science that could be funded for corporations? Again this relates to notions of cultural preservation and national sovereignty not just for the country itself but for the notion of education.

So I will leave you with some final questions. What problem is the virtual university solving for Japan? We are talking about virtual universities, but what is the problem? What are we trying to accomplish? Are we trying to make money? Are we trying to teach students better? Are we trying to give greater access? What is it that we are trying to do? Are virtual universities the future of higher education? Under what circumstances would a virtual university thrive? And what is the appropriate balance or the new reality? My final two thoughts would be: who will teach and who will learn at the virtual university. Who will become the professors? Do those of us who are traditional professors remain on residential campuses with our football teams, or do we move to the virtual university?

Or are second-class professors the ones who teach at the virtual university, but first-class professors are still on the traditional campuses?

And then finally, who will benefit? Who is benefiting? Are we talking about lower social classes? Are we talking about students who cannot get access to traditional forms of higher education? So we have to think about the effects and benefits of the virtual university.

I will be open for questions at the end of the discussion. I guess we do have a minute or two, do we not? We are 10 minutes ahead. So could I take a question if anybody would like one?

A Postmodern Critique of the Virtual University

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Presentation at Kyoto University
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Education in a Democracy

- Modernist vs. postmodernist concepts
 - Reproduction vs. democratization
 - Capital accumulation vs. socialization
 - Public good vs. private good
 - Individualism vs. collectivism
- Culture
 - Production and preservation
- Knowledge
 - Individual vs. Capital commodity
 - Postcolonial conceptions

Education and the State

- Ideological arm of the State (Althusser)
- Compensatory commodity
- National culture
 - Produce and inculcate
 - Protect national sovereignty
- Distribute knowledge
 - High status vs. technical knowledge
 - Research vs. training

Social Function

- Globalization of knowledge
 - Capital accumulation vs. cultural function
 - Corporate vs. individual good
 - Decline of nation state's role
 - End of national culture
 - Role of university?
- Producer of knowledge (research)
- Distributor of culture (teaching)

Contemporary Problems

- Academic Capitalism
- The Knowledge Factory
- Globalization & Americanization
 - Neoliberal reduction of support
- Philosophy of higher education
 - Reason (Kant)
 - Culture (Humbolt)
 - Capital (Neoliberal)
- Access & equity

The Virtual University

- Purpose:
 - Expand access
 - Increase capacity
 - Profit
- US Market = \$735 billion
- Online market = \$9.4b ('02), \$53.3 ('03)
- Institutional transformation
- Current use
 - 2% public, 19% private offer courses
 - 3% offer degrees
 - Creation of Certified Online Instructors

Class-based Problems

- High dropout rate
- Isolation
- Lack of infrastructure
- Low status vs. low status knowledge
- Physicians, scientists, lawyers, professors
- Income-Region gaps
- White-Black gap: 39.2% ('94 to '98)
- White-Hispanic gap: 42.6%
- Expanding education (Freire)
- Pedagogy for the oppressed
- Knowledge deposits

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Cultural Issues

- Cross cultural & pedagogical issues
- Quality assurance
- Lack of socialization & acculturation
- Leadership, diplomacy,
- Creation of social and cultural capital?
- Intellectual experience?
- Life skills preparation?
- Role of private vs. public education
- University of Phoenix?

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Virtual Failures

- US Open University
 - \$20 million loss
 - Lack of name recognition and niche
- Western Governor's University
 - Struggling for acceptance
- For-profit losses:
 - Columbia University (Fathom consortium)
 - New York University
 - Temple University
 - University of Maryland
- Significant differences?

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Higher Education's Future

- What kind of university is needed?
 - Solve social, economic, environmental problems
 - Reduce income inequality
 - Accumulate capital or preserve culture?
 - Professional knowledge?
 - Development and research for social good?
- Global education
 - Limits of cognition not transferal of information
 - Disinterested science
 - Promotion of national identity & sovereignty

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Conclusions

- Social and Economic role of Universities?
 - Developed vs. developing countries
 - Japan, for US?
- Cultural Appropriateness of VU
 - Social function of higher ed for Japan, for US
 - Testing hell, socialization, job connections?
 - Virtual football teams in the US?
- Modern Dangers of Academic Capitalism
 - Equity
 - Social, Intellectual, Research development
 - Cultural preservation and national sovereignty

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Some Final Questions

- What problem is VU solving for Japan?
- Is the Virtual University the future?
- Under what circumstances will VU thrive?
- Appropriate balance for VU & traditional?
- Who will teach and who will learn?
- Who will benefit?

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